Everyday urbanism and the everyday state: negotiating habitat in allotment gardens in Berlin

Hilbrandt, Hanna

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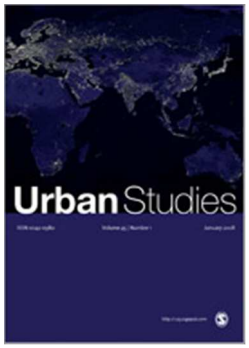

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Abstract

This paper is an inquiry into the powers at play in the everyday practices of making the city, and the social and spatial relations through which those who inhabit its margins put these powers to work. This exploration is based on a case study that considers informal dwelling practices and their regulation in allotment gardens in Berlin.

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Keywords

Everyday, state, power, urban informality, allotments, Berlin

Introduction

As governments across the globe are transferring responsibilities onto the shoulders of urban communities, the onus of developing a viable place in the city lies heavy on the shoulders of its residents. The looming effects of these developments in many spheres of people's lives have increased the urgency of understanding the dynamics of day-to-day change. This paper is an inquiry into the powers at play in the everyday practices of making the city, and the social and spatial relations through which those who informally inhabit its margins put these powers to work. My focus is on the ways in which residents mediate the proximity or presence of the state: I consider how they negotiate with state agents, translate the law or engage their peers to gain room for manoeuvre for their dwelling practices, as well as on the exclusion that occurs along the way.

In the current conjuncture of devolution, austerity and housing crisis, authors not only examine the everyday as a realm of welfare cuts, arbitrary policing or exclusionary mechanisms of control, but also as a space for shaping, remaking or circumventing structural constraints through low-budget urbanism (Bialski et al., 2015), informal provisioning (Hilbrandt, 2015) or everyday encroachment (Bayat, 2009). Whereas some point to the transformative and political potential of ordinary spaces and encounters (Simone, 2006; Iveson, 2013), others have cautioned against romanticizing the opportunities for everyday change (Valentine, 2008; Hilbrandt and Richter, 2015; Hall, 2015). Less has been said about the place of the state in these everyday manoeuvres. In fact, the state is frequently presumed to be absent from the everyday — at least in peripheral sites — or taken to be a counterforce that invades everyday life from the centre or the top down. This paper argues that a more spatial and relational approach that links everyday agency to an analysis of state power can show how these manoeuvres co-construct the state.

In this vein, my paper relates the burgeoning work on everyday urbanism to anthropological literature on the workings of the state (Herbert, 2000; Corbridge et al., 2005; Auyero, 2010), embedding these debates in a relational approach to power and space (Allen, 2016; Massey, 2005). By contesting the idea of the state as a unitary or coherent actor that regulates urban life from the top down and at a distance (Garmany, 2009),

anthropological literature that is concerned with state enactment questions commonplace separations between everyday life and the state (Das and Poole, 2004; Painter, 2006, 2007). Moreover, these approaches challenge an understanding of the spatiality of states in which the state sits 'above' its citizens and encompasses its entities (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 995, Ferguson, 2004). As I see it, they thus present an entry point from which to grasp the multiple ways in which the state is experienced, enacted or imagined in multiple sites, institutions and practices at the nexus of spatial and social relations that constitute daily life (Marston, 2004; Mountz, 2004; Secor, 2007).

Breaking with some of the more structural ways of understanding the state, these points resonate with relational approaches to power and place (Allen, 2016; Massey, 2005; Darling, 2009). Predominantly concerned with the ways in which geographies are constructed through, and, in turn, influence the interactions that take place, the latter body of work adds a spatial understanding to my concern with the presence of the state — that is, law enforcement, street level bureaucracies or other mechanisms that make up states. Through this geographical lens, the room for day-to-day change appears mobilized and put in place through the relations and practices of differently positioned actors in and across space. John Allen's (2016: 12) topological account of relational presence sheds light on how power relations allow actors to establish a presence in the here and now, from far away and while simultaneous being in other sites, as they mould distances or overcome space to make their presence felt. But it also explains how those who are present in the here and now shape the ways in which the power of absent actors manifests itself.

Following these approaches, this paper analyses data from a study of informal habitat in allotment gardens in Berlin that explored the ways in which gardeners who dwell in their allotment huts negotiate the conditions of their livelihoods.[1] These negotiations are not

[1] The study was designed as an institutional ethnography, i.e. it aimed to understand everyday practices with regard to the 'ruling relations' on which they depend (Smith, 2005). I explored multiple allotment compounds in four districts across the city through 34 interviews with bureaucrats and allotment gardeners that I conducted between July and November 2013, as well as between April and July 2014. My interviewees included administrators at the district level, allotment holders with administrative responsibilities, as well as residents in the allotments. In addition, I conducted ethnographic explorations and analysed textual sources, including statutory texts, the documentation of legal cases, and newspaper reports.

intentionally used by residents to shape structures of power, but they do effect how order takes shape. Contrary to descriptions of the everyday as a space free of agency in the face of structural constraints, this case highlights how residents gain room for manoeuvre as they mediate state power through different registers. By mobilizing their relations to local bureaucracy, using material resources, or forming their own associations, they are able to mediate the presence of the state and thus the enactment of legal and administrative frames. Contrary to descriptions of the everyday as a site of agency, my case illustrates how room for manoeuvre is constrained through the presence of state agents or the enactment of regulatory frames. As fellow gardeners use the presence of the state to close down their peers' dwelling possibilities, my narrative of everyday agency also point to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion that are established along the way.

In sum, an exploration of these moves has much to offer to an account of everyday urbanism: it illustrates how residents work with and through social and spatial relations to mediate state presence in the everyday; it facilitates an understanding of the ways in which the presence of the state alters the gardeners' opportunities for small scale change; and it helps to unveil how these spatial mediations allow actors to co-construct the state.

These arguments are developed in two sections. The first builds a framework for analysing the relevant mediations by connecting literature on the state to relational understandings of power and place. The following empirical section that makes up the body of this paper is divided in two parts. The first spells out in more detail how actors negotiate the absence of state agents to make room for everyday transgressions, while the second shows how gardeners enforce the presence of governmental actors, legal frames or state imaginaries to regulate their peers.

The state's presence and power in the everyday

Dwelling in allotments is forbidden through regulations and marked by institutional control. At the same time, gardeners use a wide array of strategies to widen the room for manoeuvre necessary to inhabit their allotment huts. But rather than in the absence of, or

directed against the state, they work, as I will try to show, with and through laws and regulation in order to stay put.

Everyday urbanism and the state

The literature on everyday, informal, do-it-yourself, or other small-scale urbanisms (Koch and Latham, 2013; Iveson, 2013; Douglas, 2014) offers only partial perspectives on the ways in which gardeners shape their room for manoeuvre. These diverse approaches are united in their concerns about day-to-day transformation, and suggest that the everyday use and appropriation of space generates possibilities for a politics of change (Goldfarb, 2007). Frequently conceptualized through questions about agency, these approaches tend to discuss processes of encroachment, micro-politics of resistance, or routine transformation as 'counter strateg[ies] against dominant modes of production' (Hehl, 2012: 17). For instance, Asef Bayat's notion of 'quiet encroachment' (2000: 24) suggests that people's quiet, penetrating and protracted politics of small steps help them to improve their positions in the city by allowing them to gain autonomy from regulatory restraints, and by advancing their access to social goods and economic opportunities.

This literature offers a complex explanation of the strategies that actors employ to advance their positions in the city, greatly widening an understanding of political transformation. While some authors on everyday urbanisms unveil, how these acts relate to the use of administrative and legal frames or the mundane work of street-level bureaucracies (Wan 2016), others tends to assume that such agency is directed against the state or developed in its absence (e.g. Bayat, 2000). Less has been said about the ways in which these practices shape how state power takes place. This paper argues that an understanding of the ways in which actors mediate the intervention of the state institutions or agents not only shows that room for transformative agency depends on the proximity and presence of the state. An account of these mediations also shows that people co-construct the state, as they use their manifold relations to institutions, regulatory frameworks or urban bureaucracies in order to mediate their presence and thereby shape how order is put in place.

State anthropology

My approach to understanding these relationships underlines the impact of micro-level processes on the constitution of states, the routine work and everyday negotiations of their multiple agents, as well as the social and spatial relations through which their practices are put in place. It draws on two bodies of literature. The first stems from multiple fields of research that range from everyday state-citizen encounters (Auyero, 2010; Corbridge et al., 2005) to large-scale social processes (Tilly, 1999; Jeffrey, 2012), but it shares an interest in anthropological inquiry into the everyday practices of states and an imagination of the state as produced in interaction (Sharma and Gupta, 2006; Secor, 2007; Nugent, 2008). This work underlines how the theoretical line frequently drawn to divide the realm of the state from that of its subjects separates a network of governance practices that in fact extends across these domains. According to these views, rather than conceiving of the state as a coherent and sovereign entity that sits above its citizens, governing takes place in constellations of multiple local actors, whilst states are built, as Nugent puts it, through 'incoherent assemblages of sites, processes, and institutions' (2008: 198). Take, for instance, Joe Painter's (2006) understanding of the state as a bundle of 'spatialized social practices', which, as he argues elsewhere, 'are to a greater or lesser extent institutionalized (in a "state apparatus") and which involve claims to authority which are general in social scope and which secure at least partial compliance through either consent, or coercion, or both' (1995: 34). The idea of disorder, hybridity and temporality that this definition entails is indicative of the constitution of states (Herbert, 2000: 555). Here, the state is not a fixed political entity, but one that entails as many rationales as the people who are engaged in it bring to situations in which the state is continuously redefined.

This approach helps to understand how allotment dwellers' room for transgression relates to the state. First, these approaches draw attention to the micro-practices that make up states as they are practised in constellations of governance that blur institutional boundaries. The state, in an anthropological sense, is not only experienced 'on the ground' as people encounter rules, pay taxes or face institutional restrictions, but it is also enacted in the everyday through bureaucrats, the law and all others concerned. Thus conceived, the state is not the source of power, but the effect of these practices that reproduce and

thereby continuously shape the state (Mitchell, 1991). The everyday is thus hardly autonomous from the state. Rather, it is the everyday that constitutes the state.

Second, an anthropological understanding of the state points to the state's spatiality, a long-standing focus of state debates (Abrams, 1988 [1977]; Mitchell, 1991). Anthropological literature has explicitly turned away from an understanding of the state as sitting above its citizens. Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) key piece on the 'vertical encompassment' of states is an interesting case in point. The authors employ this metaphor to criticize the ways in which much state literature condenses multiple ideas to draw a single picture (Ferguson, 2006: 92). On the one hand, 'verticality' captures the scalar architecture of this image, in which the state is located somewhere above its citizens (2006: 111). 'Encompassment', on the other hand, depicts the state's imagined volumetric qualities: the ability to embrace the entities (family, community, region) to which it is considered superior (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002: 982). In practice, the production of this image has powerful implications. It allows the state's practitioners to wield authority, ensure their legitimacy and secure their supremacy over other brokers of power. As it masks the real and material production of the state (Abrams, 1988 [1977]), anthropological scholars have urged us to look beyond this imaginary. In shifting focus they note that states are reproduced in the everyday through prosaic means (Painter, 2006; see also Allen, 2016: 57; 157). These means may not be ubiquitous, but, as Painter (2006: 221) notes, they tend to be pervasive. The state's symbolic and social practices in all spheres of life allow it to gain spatial reach and presence — even outside of its institutions.

If this literature helpfully dismantles the absence of the state in the everyday, rarely, as I see it, do authors discuss how state presence can be mediated across space, that is, how absent state actors are kept at bay, or — to turn things around — how they reach into people's daily lives from outside of the immediate here and now. In more concrete terms, understanding how residents informally use the gardens as dwelling places requires more than paying attention to the ways in which the state is practiced in the everyday, as all concerned parties implement, bend or ignore regulations. This focus makes it necessary to understand the relations of these actors to other practices and sites.

Relational geographies and the presence of the state

It is useful to conceptualize the ways in which power relations work across space through relational literature on power and space (Allen, 2004; 2008; Amin, 2002; Massey, 2005). Relational thinking aims to foster a better understanding of the links through which actors are intertwined with structures and processes on other geographical scales and in different sites. It stresses, as Allen and Cochrane note (2007: 1172), that 'power is a relational effect of political interaction, not a bloc of pre-formed decision-making powers or a distributed capability'. It follows that power is not *held* and, when exercised, *transferred* by some (the state) onto others (the residents), but that it is rather mobilized in exchange. Thus there is a need for less attention to the resources that actors control — that is, their latent capacities — and more attention to the ways in which these resources are effectively employed (see also Allen, 2008: 1614; 2016: 39). It is in this sense that power is understood as a relational attribute — a product of mobilization or enactment.

This understanding has further implications for an analysis of the everyday. As I see it, the residents' everyday agency depends on the relations that they build from specific spaces to other actors in different sites. Their distance or proximity not only influences their relations and shapes the ways in which power is mobilized by both sides (Jones, 2012: 819; Low, 2005: 81), but these mobilizations also shape the spaces in or across which such interaction takes place. In this line of thinking, space is imbued with, or built through, power relations that connect specific sites with other spaces and times (see also Massey, 2005). Consequently, it is the move away from a contained or territorial understanding of space with 'pre-defined distances or simple proximities' (Allen, 2004: 19) that allows me to explain small-scale acts of political engagement that emerge in a specific site in relation to other (state) actors and sites: through these relations, differently positioned actors mobilize, construct or assemble power in order to put these acts in place.

I borrow John Allen's (2016: 12) topological understanding of relational presence for my analyses of the state's enactment in the everyday. [2] Presence, relationally understood, amounts to more than simply being in a site, that is, in the here and now. Relational understanding further invites us to consider how power relations allow actors to compose presence across space, that is, to distort distance and establish their presence from afar — or, turning things around, to be present in the here and now, but similarly in other sites. Relational presence turns the mediation of presence into a question of indirect presence or co-presence.

To understand the state as present or absent entails a number of crucial difficulties, if the state is defined as a set of more or less institutionalized practises. A fragmented understanding of the state not only complicates the notion of the state as an object that can be moved in or out of different sites, it also makes it difficult to consider the state as completely absent. These challenges make it crucial to stress that the state is understood here in its multiple guises, including street level bureaucracies, law enforcement agencies, or statutory documents, although I predominantly consider the practices of local regulators. Moreover, considering presence as relational status allows me to understand the simultaneity of absence and presence. While gardeners may work to keep the local regulator off the site, the state may still make its presence felt in other ways.

Building on this analytical frame, the subsequent sections return to the allotments and the negotiations at work in these sites to explore how actors build room for manoeuvre by negotiating relations to the state. To do this, I explore a set of mediating mechanisms (Tilly, 1999) in processes of governing: these mechanisms not only describe how residents use and translate regulations or build relations to state agents for their own needs, but also account for the spaces in which these manoeuvres takes place. Residents, I argue, shape the order that is produced by mediating the presence of the state.

[2] Topological thinking aims at an understanding of space that accounts for the folding and twisting of spatial arrangements between elsewheres and the here and now beyond flat surfaces and metric registers (Allen 2011: 283). Allen employs the notion to understand how power relationships are transformed across space, or transform the space itself. The prime interest, as he writes, is to grasp how 'power relationships compose the distances enacted' (2016: 37).

Allotment dwelling and the presence of the state

To explore how residents negotiate room for their dwelling practices through their relations to state agents and bureaucratic frames, it is necessary to consider some of the legal and historic conditions in which these negotiations take place. Berlin's allotment gardens go back to a period of industrialisation and rapid expansion of the city at the end of the nineteenth century. While dwelling in these sites was not uncommon in their foundational years, allotment living became a mass phenomenon in the aftermath of both World Wars – given the shortage of housing and severe damage to the city. Local regulations had banned allotment dwelling since 1951, but in 1983 the introduction of a Federal Allotment Law (*Bundeskleingartengesetz*; hereafter: BKleinG) in the BRD (Federal Republic of Germany) prohibited residing in gardens in this part of the city. In the GDR (German Democratic Republic), dwelling was similarly forbidden, and as in the West, other standards prevailed in everyday practices.

Today, 958 compounds, commonly referred to as colonies, provide approximately half a million members with mini-scale garden plots and mini-scale allotment huts on 3,018 hectare of inner-city space (SenStadt, 2012). There is no quantitative data on those who inhabit these sites. Most gardeners take up residence within allotment huts only over the summer and maintain contracts for their flats. But allotment dwellers also include: people who have lived in allotments since the war and were possibly born in a shed; Berliners who recently moved into a compound to find cheap shelter in the face of rising rents; gardeners who own an over-sized allotment hut that allows for a decent living standard, who have chosen to move into their gardens for reasons that frequently have to do with proximity to nature and comfort; and finally, a growing number of people who face severe difficulties in entering the housing market because of discrimination. To be sure, dwelling is not ubiquitous, but one is likely to find at least one permanent dweller in each colony and higher numbers in the city's periphery.

The remainder of this paper explores a set of mechanisms through which residents mediate the presence of the state in order to stay put despite different regulations. I illustrate these mediations in two ways. First, I seek to show how people carve out, protect and open up

room for manoeuvre, circumventing the strict enforcement of rules or freely adapting the ideas behind laws by managing to avoid the presence of local bureaucracy. Through these means that alter the dwellers' relations to the state, they circumvent its reach and gain leverage for their dwelling practices. The second empirical part similarly considers the ways in which residents compose distances through their relations to the law or state representatives, but to different ends. This section traces how residents obtain leverage to restrict their peers' room for manoeuvre by enforcing the presence of the state. To do so, they draw on formal state frameworks or reach out to state representatives; that is, they use the state to evoke strict enforcement of rules.

Out of reach: tempting pretence and self-regulation

Mediating the presence of the state — that is, keeping state agents off the site or circumventing the enforcement of the law — can work through a variety of means that create wriggle room for the gardeners. Two exemplary mechanisms illustrate this well: ***tempting pretence*** invites bureaucrats to overlook transgressions in a context of limited capacities and resources for law-enforcement and persuades regulatory actors to remain off-site, suspending intense regulation when a degree of formality is performed to which they can agree. ***Self-regulation*** describes the ways in which gardeners keep regulators at bay by taking transgressive practices into their own hands. It is helpful to consider each of these mechanisms in more detail.

Tempting pretence works to persuade bureaucrats to turn a blind eye in the face of the limited capacities and resources that bureaucracies hold in order to regulate practices of informal dwelling. Allotment gardening is supervised by a small number of administrators who oversee the practices of the gardeners. To understand these governance relations, it is necessary to know that allotment land is predominantly owned by the city, but rented out at the district level. Once leased by the gardeners' own association — the district association of allotment gardeners [*Bezirksverband der Kleingärtner*] — their administration takes over the management of all compounds in one district, commonly subletting single colonies, which, in turn, sublet individual plots. Despite sharing responsibilities, the

regulation of this associations remains in the hands of the local district. Given that this is no small task, the capacities of district bureaucracy frequently do not suffice to track down the transgressions of all gardeners. Although regulation requires on-site visits, the limited resources of state agents — and the pragmatism and compromise in which this limitation results — tend to prevent face-to-face encounters, or the frequent presence of regulators in the allotment compounds.

In this context, tempting pretence works through persuasion: it builds on the openings of the law as well as the materiality and aesthetics of the plot to stage an imaginary of a correct use of the allotment plot. In keeping up this imaginary, the suggestive performance of the gardeners allows regulators who are already overworked to overlook transgressions as long as they remain within a limited scope. The concealment of illegal infrastructure extensions provides a useful example. A paragraph in my field notebook illustrates this well:

> Visiting a colony in which I want to lease a plot: a dark wooden hut and several additional sheds are surrounded by numerous conifers. […] I approach the neighbour to introduce my study. He invites me to enter the free allotment through a hole in the fence to his adjacent garden. […] Back on his grounds we briefly chat: 'We move out — into the allotment — during the summer', he tells me, 'the neighbour on the other side too'. Was I planning on dwelling? … I would not need to worry about that, the head of the colony lived here too. […] Still talking, he tours the garden: he would be happy if I would take the allotment. But only when we arrive at the back of his plot do I realize why. His already spacious hut extends into an annex — presumably a living room — and a hidden secret. This construction, he explains, was an illegal extension. Every time the district association showed the adjacent plot to potential leaseholders, he needed to hide this construction under a plastic tent. The plastic tent was allowed and provided a good means to cover the house underneath (*fieldnotes 23.04.14*).

Here, concealment is blatant, easily discernible, and works through superficial means. The same could be said about saunas in sheds, backyard extensions or apparently removable fireplaces that are similarly illegal, but commonly ignored. In these cases it remains unclear whether these means actually do succeed in distracting the administration from the (still) obvious legal violations, or if city officials are simply persuaded to wittingly overlook them.

The gardeners' activity, it seems, not only manipulates the bureaucrats' ability to see, it also enables them to knowingly overlook violations so as to justify non-interference.

Tempting pretence can be described as an attempt to eschew the presence of regulators: as gardeners avoid giving city officials a reason to intervene, they allow regulators to remain inactive so that room for manoeuvre remains intact. Still, the state cannot be imagined as completely absent. If the local regulators do not appear on-site, they remain present from afar. The fact that the authority of the state is felt in the allotments is precisely what makes mechanisms such as tempting pretence necessary in the first place.

Similarly, ***self-regulation*** directly shapes the involvement of bureaucracy. By taking issues that arise into their own hands, gardeners are able to solve problems within their own realm of responsibility, and in this way they can prevent the involvement and thus limit the presence of local bureaucracy through the governmental setup described above.

Let me present the workings of this mechanism by drawing on the case of a colony with numerous outsized buildings. In this well-kept compound most allotment huts were suitable for dwelling and endowed with building permission, but few of their owners held dwelling rights. Nevertheless, a high density of unauthorized occupancy characterized the site. To understand how residents accommodate these practices, self-regulation is key. Consider, for instance, a conversation with Mr Koch and Mrs Wolf, two officials in the local gardening administration.

> Mr Koch: Even before someone gets a new allotment … they are…
> Mrs Wolf: Yes, they are closely guided and they have …
> Mr Koch: … inoculated!
> Mrs Wolf: Yes, inoculated, inoculated, in any case, … but it is the case that most have these questions [about appropriate conduct] anyway.
> Mr Koch: We also say very clearly what we tolerate and what we don't. ... And those who don't accept that — we don't want them here (*interview, 16.09.13, my translation*).

Mr Koch and Mrs Wolf's discussion clearly points to their own engagement in mediating the rules of the game. In stating what they tolerate, and excluding those who do not play by their rules, they exert forms of authority that do not necessarily comply with the position of

local bureaucracy. Self-regulation thus directs attention to what Nugent (2008: 209) terms a 'subaltern governmentality'. This allusion to Foucault not only highlights that civil actors shape conduct by 'moulding the souls' of 'all walks of life' (*ibid.*: 211), but it also illustrates that gardeners translate state frameworks as they are enacted. As Mr Koch continues to explain, it is crucial to note that their engagement also creates autonomy that allows them to co-construct the order that is built.

> You know, […] when there is someone building another floor, I see that from far away. We would never let that go through …
> H.H.: Do you mean that your association regulates this internally?
> Mr Koch: Yes we regulate. Of course, to avoid the involvement of third parties: the district association or even the local district *(interview, 16.09.13, my translation).*

Mr Koch's engagement could be described as the only appropriate reaction, as the regulatory efforts he describes fall into the remits of his responsibility. His reasoning, however, requires further reflection. The motivation he states for getting involved is not, as one would expect, the blatant illegality of the imaginary roof, but rather the attempt to avoid the involvement of third parties. His statement implies that officials in the colonies assume such responsibilities not only to regulate, but also to protect and design their room for manoeuvre. *Self-regulation* underlines how gardeners gain leverage by keeping state agents off the site, as the regulation of some transgressions allows them to create a realm of acceptable tolerance within which they can get away with other offences.

The examples that this section provides neither show that the law is simply 'performed into being' (Blomley, 2014: 142) by way of top-down implementation, nor do they picture the everyday as a space of agency free of state regulation. Rather, they suggest thinking through everyday agency as dependent on the relations between allotment holders and city bureaucrats. On the one hand, this approach points to the work that the process entails. Spaces of everyday agency neither appear as mundane nor as spontaneous, but as carefully tested. Through this work allotment dwellers shape the kind of encounters that take place, and create spaces of everyday engagement in and through which they adapt state policies to their own needs. On the other hand, the mechanisms considered in this section underline the spatiality of this process. It is not that the state is actually further away, but by

mediating the presence of bureaucracy, gardeners are able to place their transgressions beyond the reach of the state. This is not to say that the state is completely absent. While the hold of state agents is constrained, legal frameworks still exert state power and make their presence felt.

In close sight: snitching and boundary work

Mediating institutional presence does not automatically give rise to room for manoeuvre. It also points to mechanisms through which allotment holders draw on the state to constrain other gardeners' room for everyday agency. This section considers the ways in which allotment holders enforce the presence of local bureaucrats and thereby close their fellows' wriggle room. It illustrates how gardeners play with the proximity of the state in its multiple practices and imaginations through two exemplary mechanisms. ***Snitching*** points at outright betrayal in the face of individual trouble; it illustrates the vulnerability that residents may be exposed to as their peers enforce the presence of state agents — and, concomitantly, encourage the strict enforcement of rules. Through the notion of ***boundary work,*** I illustrate a mechanism that works to exclude those the majority considers to be different. Here, neighbours bring in state agents to enforce their own interest at the expense of others.

Snitching constitutes an overt mechanism of referral that describes how residents actively reach out to local bureaucracies to turn somebody in over a minor issue, thereby drawing limits around transgressions that they deem inappropriate. As individuals call upon gardening administrators to inform them of local irregularities, they force state representatives to restrict tolerance, because snitching no longer allows local bureaucracies to overlook transgressions that may previously have been ignored.

The story of Mrs Müller, resident of a colony in a remote district in the West of Berlin, illustrates this well. Mrs Müller used to be a teacher of religion until she changed careers to open up a sauna. But the financial burden of her new business forced her to reduce her living expenditure. In order to save on rent she leased a plot in the colony, on which was situated a sizeable two-storey hut that she bought for 50,000 German marks (DM)

(approximately equivalent to €25,000 today). By German standards, her home was certainly small, but it was fully equipped and all rooms offered beautiful views into the surrounding gardens. Mrs Müller's account of how she came to live in an allotment colony provides some background on the development of the colony through routinized transgression.

> To get a garden was really difficult, but I had a partner whose ex-mother-in-law lived here permanently and he instantly planned to remodel [the hut] into a house.
> H.H. Was your house the same as it is now?"
> Mrs Müller: No, none of these houses, they all grow in the winter. It was quite a sizeable house, I think more that 74 square metres, already quite big. Then I … well, I secretly expanded … made [it] higher. ... You can see it here, this was the old entrance and this all is an extension, the roof has been pulled forward and the sheds in the back have been integrated into the house. But everyone did that. It was very normal here (*interview, 13.09.13, my translation*).

Her description speaks of toleration and mutual consent. However, when I met Mrs Müller, the normalcy of her everyday arrangements and the circular expansion of her house had recently been disrupted. In fact, she was just about to move out, because she was unable to resolve a conflict that arose within the colony. When I asked her what type of conflict could have come to have such severe effects, Mrs Müller shared her worries:

> I was in trouble … trouble with a neighbour … And in trouble with the district association. I had to remove my gas tank last year […] one isn't supposed to have heating. Other neighbours have also been reported … by this guy who lived here … and they have also moved out … He threatened all the neighbours and then … he reported everyone to the district association, because we lived here illegally … The district association had always tolerated that, but presumable they have to follow up when they receive such a charge (*interview, 13.08.13, my translation*).

Like others in the colony, Mrs Müller was not playing by the official rules. The response to her rule breaking is a story of relationships of trust, which illustrates the relevance of neighbourhood bonds in the context of informal habitat. When the officials in the colony did not step in, things got out of hand: her neighbour's snitching forced district bureaucrats to intervene in their dispute. Although the local bureaucracy did not terminate Mrs Müller's lease, as the report of the neighbour hardly sufficed as prove of Mrs Müller's illegal

occupancy, they were able to force her to dismantle the gas tank that was essential for her to dwell. In sum, snitching describes a mechanism that brings absent regulators back on-site. Hereby neighbours negotiate with state bureaucracies in order to exert domination. By enforcing the presence of the state, they draw on state power to constrain the capacity of others.

Boundary work describes how neighbours constrain local practices through state power because of collective mistrust. Like *snitching*, I use the notion to describe how fellow gardeners close the room for manoeuvre that residents may have widened through strategies that mediate the presence of bureaucracy. But unlike snitching, this mechanism describes the ways in which a local majority can close down the wriggle room of others by defining what they consider to be appropriate conduct.

Boundary work was a theme that weaved through much of my interview data. What finally incited me to consider it in more detail was a case of three Romanian seasonal workers who lived in an allotment compound, and who were forced to leave. I first came across this case in a discussion with Mr Fischer, the thoughtful president of a colony on the outskirts of the city. His compound stood out through its rather developed housing stock, but although the residential use of these houses was certainly the norm over the summer, Mr Fischer made sure to clarify that his was not one of those colonies that were normally inhabited throughout the year. Hence this case of permanent inhabitation confronted Mr Fischer with a worrying exception. He sketched the outlines of the situation.

> And now we also have two Romanians living here. Or three. … that is also something where I would say, no, I don't want to have this. No slumification [*Verslummung*] ... this doesn't have to get established, right? It's an absolutely unsanitary arrangement that three men are living there.
> H.H.: And is it the case that the plot looks deteriorated?
> Mr Fischer: Well, when they don't have a shower and nothing to wash … we don't know how they are doing it with the toilet and so on…
> H.H.: Have you talked to them?
> Mr Fischer: No, they don't speak German, let's put it that way (*interview, 09.07.14, my translation*).

Mr Fischer's contention highlights a fear of consolidation. He does not want the conditions in the colony to move towards 'slumification', which he relates to the 'unsanitary' arrangement of the three men. Uncertainty about the actual circumstances of the living situation runs through the description, but the notion of 'slumification' abstracts from the individual case to construct their dwelling conditions as deviant. This is not a case of overt exclusion because of ethnicity, but because of mistrust, racist stereotyping is indirectly reinforced. Mr Fischer's predicament was partly due to resistance in the colony. He reasoned:

> Well, it's really difficult! ... On the one hand there is this threat of slumification, and as these social structures form, they meet absolute resistance.
> H.H.: How did the neighbours respond to these men?
> Mr Fischer: Hostile, ... dismissive, ... critical, right? ... honestly, I have to say, it's real difficult. You cannot really talk to anyone about this (*interview, 09.07.14, my translation*).

The case must have been widely noted. According to his statement, the Romanians were not received in an open way. As they did not partake in the community life of the colony — remaining strangers, presumably due to language barriers — they could not build on any possible solidarity or power of association. As a result, they were faced with an internal border that prevented them from learning the rules of the game that are crucial in order to be able to dwell. Moreover, as Mr Fischer indicates, the case was not openly discussed, which forced him to decide on his own whether he needed to react or could simply ignore the plot. The situation thus gave rise to uneasy tension between the vulnerability of the men and Mr Fischer's individual decision-making power, which is hardly legitimized in a democratic way. While this situation granted Mr Fischer the agency to act, it also overstrained him with 'the burden of concern' (Seligman, 1997: 173). As he abdicated this responsibility, he brought the rules of the books to bear, or, in other words, he reinforced the presence of the state through the application of regulatory frames.. At the time of the interview Mr Fischer had already notified the district association. The association, he speculated, would probably proceed by terminating the contract and clearing up the plot.

Snitching and boundary work point to the complexity of power relations not only between the state and the gardeners, but also between the different allotment holders within one

compound. By snitching, the first mechanism, people appear to individually mobilize leverage in pursuit of their own aims. Through boundary work, power is put to work to enforce a local norm. But just as in the former case, power is not merely assembled through the collective of the gardeners on-site. As gardeners call upon local bureaucracy, it is the presence of the state that allows them to draw the line.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the mechanisms through which allotment holders work to gain everyday agency in order to enforce practices of informal dwelling. It illustrated how gardeners manoeuvre their transgressions within or beyond the reach of the state, tracing some of the ways in which they mediate the presence of the state. In sum, this discussion allowed me to argue that residents work with and through social and spatial relations to the state gain room for manoeuvre to dwell. By unpacking these complex relations, I aimed to contribute to the literature on state anthropology and the everyday in at least four ways:

First, my discussion deals with the multiple actors who construct the state. It has highlighted some of the ways in which people build room for manoeuvre through state frameworks as they mobilize power for their own needs. My aim in tracing these mechanisms was not to show how residents themselves implement the state, as the notion of governmentality might suggest, but to highlight how they use room for discrepancy and manoeuvre order as they shape the meaning of state frameworks and stir the involvement of local bureaucracy. This discussion has contributed to one of the longstanding aims of state anthropological perspectives: to challenge the analytical separation between the state and the everyday, instead accounting for the relations between differently positioned actors within and outside of formal institutions.

Going beyond this literature, the mechanisms that I have explored illustrate how people not only react to encounters with the state, but design how such encounters take place. Therefore, as I see it, the enactment of state order must be seen from two sides. Mediating mechanisms are not only initiated by state actors, as in Tilly's (1999) helpful account, but

also by actors beyond the state. For an anthropological understanding of state enactment, it is thus crucial to consider the gardeners' mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion as essential components of the construction of the state.

Second, accounting for the state as co-constructed effects our understanding of the ways in which the everyday can cause lasting change. This paper has started to explore the potentials of the mundane by confronting challenges of everyday urbanism. I argued that the mechanisms in focus cannot be understood as a form of resistance, or as autonomous from the state, but that they need to be considered as embedded in state frameworks. They build on relations between state and civil society that may be characterized by, among other things, cooperation, direct confrontation, ignorance, referral or neglect. To account for these small-scale acts as a means of shaping, that is, actually making the state changes an understanding of the effects of these practices. In this way, small advances can neither be understood as instant change or easy gains nor as negligible to the production of order. As a modality of state enactment, these practices have a crucial place in the continuous making of order but their effects tend to depend on longer-term relations to other practices and sites.

This reading also underlines the inequalities that inhabit a micro-politics of change. The everyday may be a site of bottom-up agency, but it is also crucial to note the uneven capacities of agents and the everyday mechanisms of exclusion that the local itself entails. The paper has highlighted the weak democratic control in everyday negotiations. As the presence of state enforcement is mediated in the everyday, regulation depends on neighbourhood bonds and collective norms. Micro-publics may hereby hinder negotiations or close up room for manoeuvre in order to reinforce exclusions.

Third, by exploring the spatial relations through which mediating mechanisms work, I have tried to go beyond an account of the state as always already present in the everyday through prosaic means. Borrowing the notion of relational presence (Allen, 2016: 12), the state's proximity and reach appear to be mediated rather than predefined through the territorialities of the city or the resources held in certain sites. If state anthropology has moved from an centralized imagination of the state as sitting above its citizens to analyse its whereabouts as dispersed in the everyday (cf. Allen, 2004), it falls short of accounting

for the relationality of the state's presence or absence. Order, as I have aimed to show, is established through the mediation of power across space.

Entangled in these inquiries into the geographies of state enactment is, fourth, a question about the spatiality of everyday urbanism. Beyond a topological understanding of urban margins as a space of institutional absence, my approach has aimed to underline some of the ways in which social relations between the gardeners and local regulators work to produce space, while these relations are also constituted through space. The possibilities of everyday agency can thus be understood as dependent on the ways in which the presence of the state is relationally constructed across space.

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